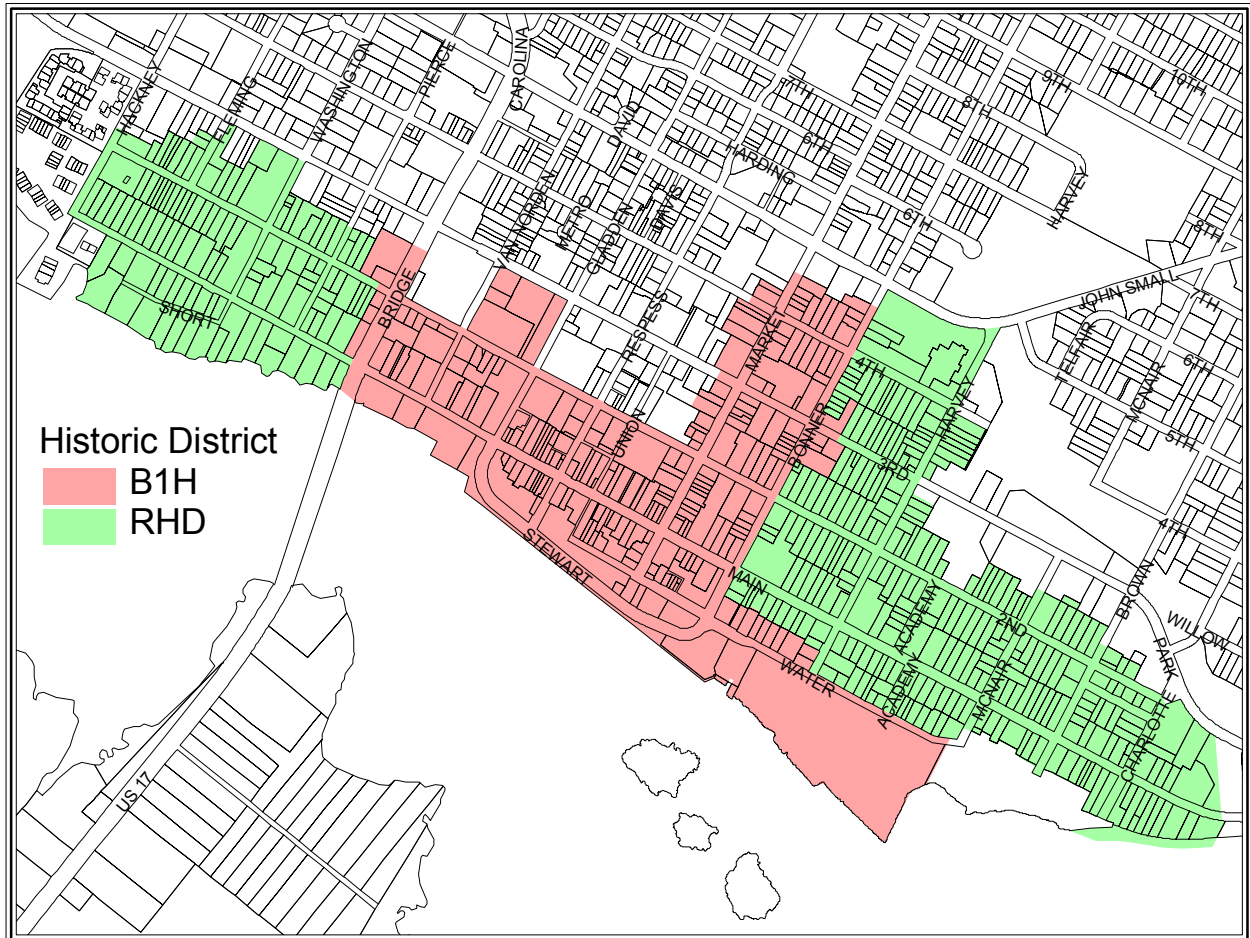


## Chapter 2.0

## History of the District



Washington Local Historic District

### 2.1 District Map

Washington's historic district comprises generally the area between the Pamlico River to the southwest, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to the northeast, Hackney Street to the northwest, and Charlotte Street to the southeast. The district, one of the most intact historic districts in the state, includes the downtown business district

as well as the surrounding residential areas, representing generally the location of the original Town of Washington. The map above shows both the residential (green) and commercial (red) historic overlay zoning lines.

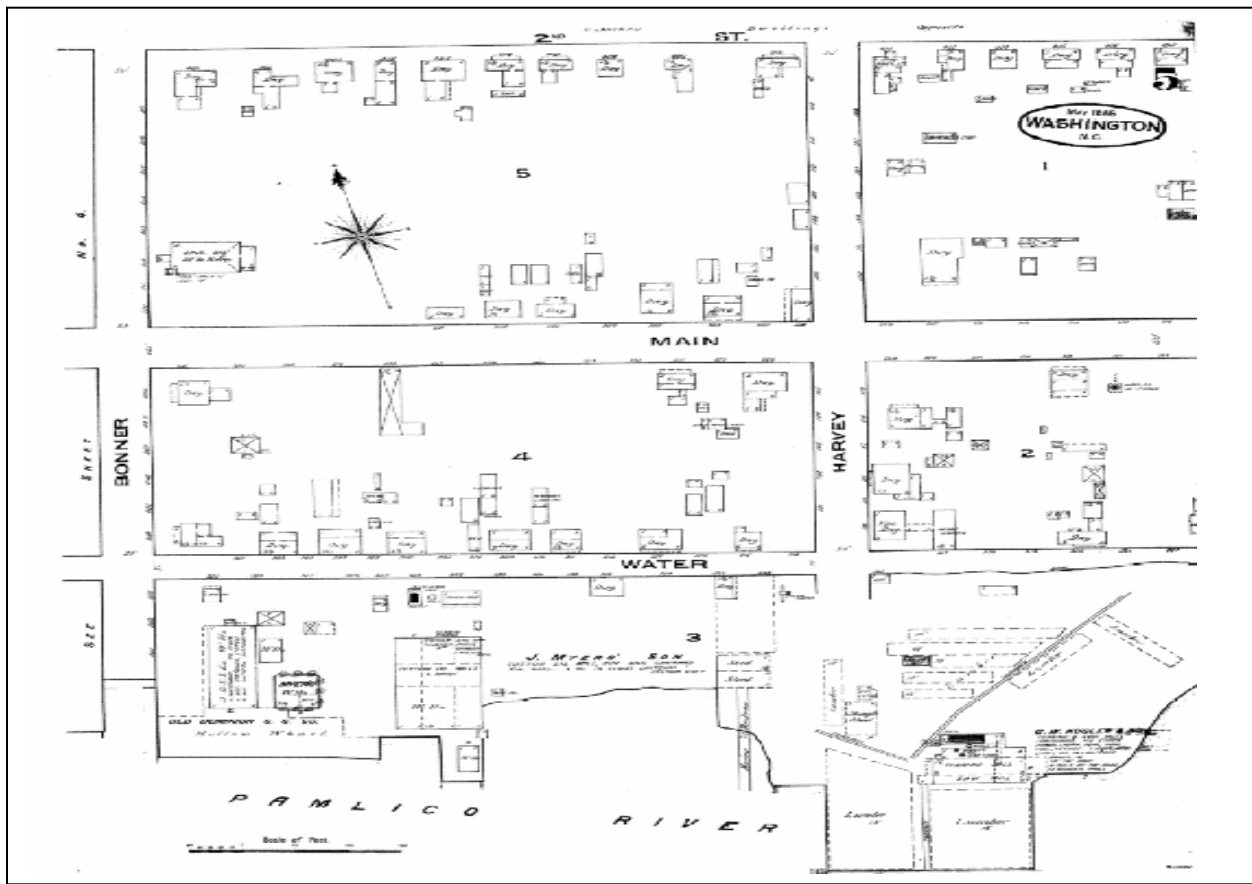
## 2.2 Brief History of the District

### *Early History of the Area (1500-1770)*

Being located prominently on a navigable waterway, the area that would ultimately be known as Washington had English visitors as early as the late 1500's. By 1690, settlements had developed along the banks of the Pamlico and Tar Rivers, and in 1705, nearby Bath became the first chartered town in the State of North Carolina.

### *Founding of Washington (1770-1780)*

In 1771, James Bonner founded the town of "Forks of the Tar River" on 337 acres of land acquired from Christopher Dudley, the land's original grantee. In 1776, the same year as our nation's independence, the town of Washington was established when the "Forks of the Tar River" name was changed to honor General George Washington. In fact, Washington, North Carolina is the first town in America that was named for our country's most prominent founding father. In 1782, Washington was officially incorporated by the North Carolina General Assembly.



1885 Sanborn Insurance Map, Washington, NC

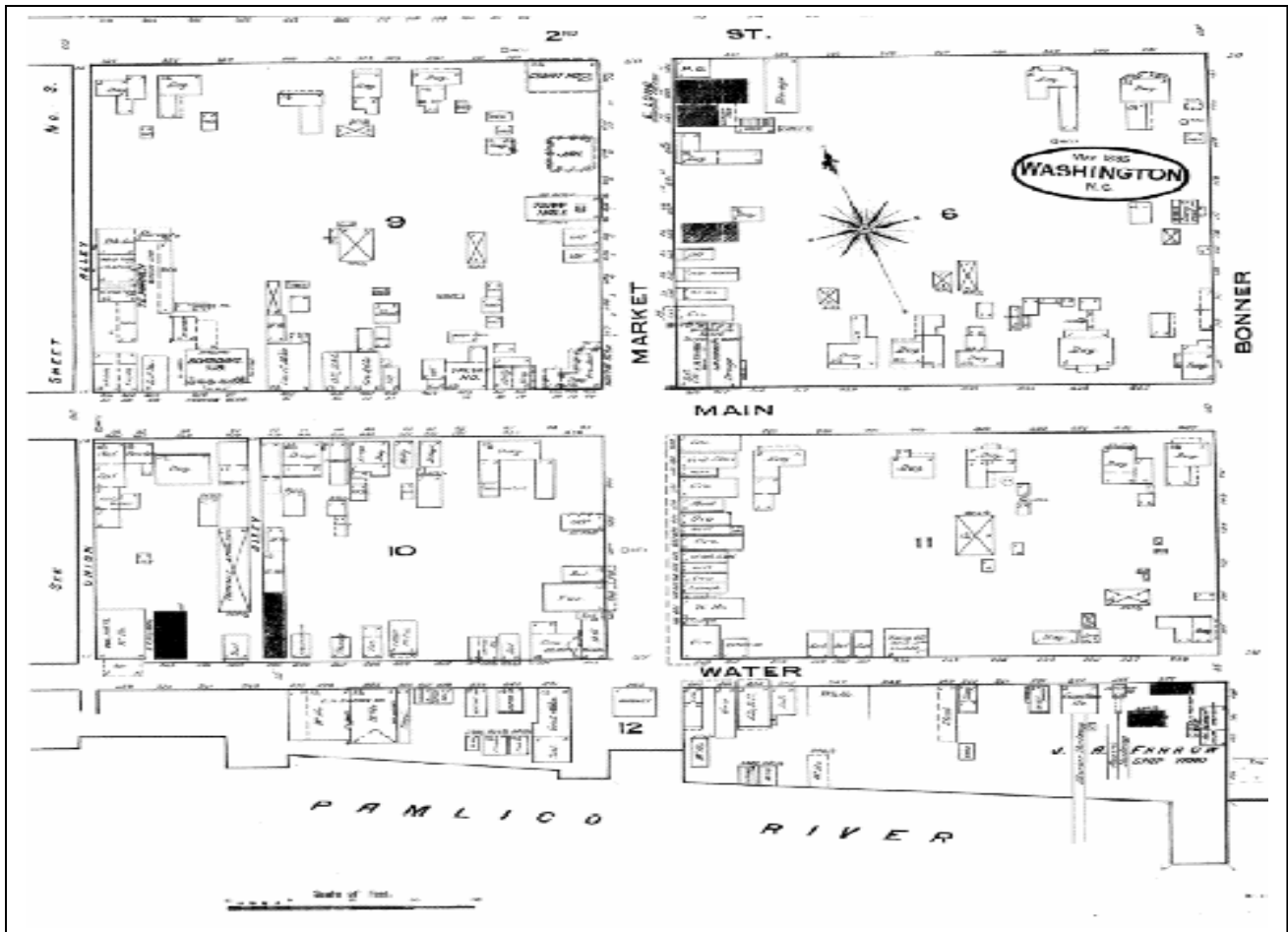
### *Development and Growth (1780-1865)*

During the Revolutionary War, the town ultimately became an important supply port for the Continental Army. After Savannah, Charlestown (Charles Town), and Wilmington had all been overcome by the British Army, Washington's revolutionary role became even more prominent. By 1784, Washington had become a regional trading port, due to its location at the junction of coastal and inland rivers.

Due to its location along the two navigable waterways, the town became

the cultural and commercial center of Beaufort County. As a result, Washington became the county seat by the last decade of the 1700's.

Early in the Civil War, Washington was captured by Federal Troops and therefore, contributed little to the Confederate war effort. As part of the abandonment of the town, the Northern troops set fire to a stockpile of naval stores. The resulting fire quickly spread, destroying a large part of the town. Unfortunately, most of Washington's early architecture was destroyed as a result of this fire.



1885 Sanborn Insurance Map, Washington, NC

### *Reconstruction and Twentieth Century Expansion (1865- Present)*

Following that devastating fire, the town was rebuilt. A fire in 1900, caused by a wood stove, destroyed the buildings in the business district once again. Therefore, the downtown's commercial architecture dates from the first third of the twentieth century.

After this second rebuilding era, Washington continued to be a small inland port town during the first half of the twentieth century. While a new waterfront was constructed in 1969 resulting the removal of a number of industrial buildings, the district appears today much like it did during the early twentieth century. This new waterfront included the construction of the Stewart Parkway, a 1,500 foot long walkway and bulkhead along the Pamlico River. In 2002, the waterfront area was renovated to provide enhanced boater and pedestrian access to both Washington's waterfront and its downtown.



Washington, NC waterfront, renovated in 2002

### *The Historic District*

The Washington Historic District includes over 600 properties encompassing the historic downtown and surrounding residential areas. While most of the buildings date from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, there are several structures remaining from the late 1700's and early 1800's.



Washington's rich post-Victorian architecture found in its commercial area is complemented by a number of residential architectural styles including, among others, Victorian, Colonial, Revival Greek Revival, Federal, and Craftsman.